# Social Questions
## BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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# Labor and the War

Trade unions and labor leaders have gone on record repeatedly as opposed to the United States participating in the European war. Besides pointing to the threat to civil rights and labor organizations if this country should enter the war, labor is calling for drastic curbs on profiteering. This stand has been taken by numerous AFL and CIO unions, meeting in conventions and other gatherings, since early September.

### LABOR AGAINST WAR

The report of the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor to the 59th Convention, Oct. 2, 1939, said: "We are unalterably opposed to our own nation becoming involved in the European conflict. We favor the exercise of neighborly and mediatorial influence by our government in all efforts to promote peace and to compose differences between nations. But in doing this we insist that our government shall pursue a judicious policy, exercising care and caution and a firm determination to avoid involvement in European conflicts and European wars." At the same convention President William Green called on Congress to enact "drastic legislation to prevent war profiteering."

The Central Labor Council, AFL, of New Haven, Connecticut, declared, on September 21st, that this "is a war of imperialist governments, and for this reason the United States must avoid any involvements."

President John L. Lewis, at the Convention of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, Oct. 10, 1939, said, "Organized labor is emphatically opposed to any involvement of the United States in the European war." In his Labor Day speech, 1939, Lewis declared, "Labor in America wants no war nor any part of war. Labor wants the right to work and live."

Sidney Hillman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, and Vice President of the CIO, maintains that "American labor will resolutely oppose American participation in war."

Significant was a resolution adopted by the National Council of the National Maritime Union on Jan. 18, 1940, "condemning attempts of public officials to 'encourage loans to foreign countries instead of solving America's number one problem—unemployment. . . .' Linking the 'drive for war involvement' with reductions in relief and social items in the national budget, it declared that Congress 'as representative of the American people has flagrantly overlooked the immediate needs of the American people. . . .' 'The first duty of Congress is to the people it represents. A war scare and hysteria has been created in this country by those who would like to see the United States involved in the war'." (New York *Times* Jan. 19, 1940.)

The position of the seaman is more critical than any other section of the populace. With him it is not a choice of whether he is in the war or not. He knows that he is in it already, and is subject to the perils of submarine warfare.

A pamphlet published by District Council No. 2 of the Maritime Federation of the Pacific, and entitled "The Yanks Are Not Coming," is gaining wide circulation throughout the labor movement in this country. It expresses the conviction of the seaman, and of the rank and file all over the land, that "the peoples of the conflicting countries are equally victims," that . . . "American labor (will) do anything in its power to help the tragic families of European working people. But taking up arms with either side would merely plunge us into the same dilemma without helping the people involved." (The Yanks Are Not Coming by M. Quin, page 11.)

### EFFECT OF THE WAR ON LABOR

Labor knows that it has much to lose not only by war, but by restraints that come during preparation for war. Federal money is withdrawn from works projects and spent on battleships. War fears give an impetus to slashes in relief, social security pensions and compensation, and other hard-earned social services; and wages do not rise with the increased cost of commodities.

Professor Paul Douglas and Frances Lamberson, writing in the *American Economic Review,* September, 1921, defined the effect of the world war on American labor when they said: "All the evidence seems to indicate that at the termination of the great war the return in commodities which the American workman received for an equal length of time worked (one hour) was from 10 to 20 per cent. less than it was in the decade 1890-1899, and from 7 to 17 per cent. less than it was before the sharp upward movement of prices in 1916. The purchasing power of the established week's work, moreover, was from 20 to 30 per cent. less than in the nineties and from 10 to 20 per cent. less than in 1915."

An article on "Labor Problems in Time of War" in the *International Labor Review* (November, 1939) tells of a tendency in many countries, as in 1918, "toward the extension of hours of work and the reduction of work periods, at the very time when labor is required to work more intensively and at an accelerated pace," which the

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experience of the World War showed led to "the physical and nervous exhaustion of the workers." For workers in industry, the article continues, the accident rate is expected to rise, because of "the speeding up of production and the employment of an improvised labor force, composed largely of women and young persons," and because of the new chemicals, munitions and other items being manufactured, against which no satisfactory safety measures have yet been devised.

Mrs. Florence Kerr, assistant WPA Commissioner in Omaha, speaking at the Nebraska Conference for Social Workers, asked if the war in Europe made any less vital all of the social aims of the New Deal. "We stopped practically every kind of public improvement work in this country during the last European war, and we fell so far behind that we never caught up again during our post-war prosperity years. Then in the first years of the depression we fell still further behind, and we still haven't caught up with the country's actual needs, in spite of the work done by the WPA, the PWA, and other agencies using federal funds and giving assistance to local communities."

Colonel Harrington, WPA Commissioner, summed up the views of experts in a radio address late last month when he said that from all the war business this country can get we cannot reasonably expect next year a reduction of our total employment by more than one-quarter at the utmost. He also pointed out that the WPA, during 1939, has reduced its rolls by 1,300,000 workers, the bulk of whom have not yet succeeded in getting any private employment."

John L. Lewis voiced similar convictions when, addressing the Congress of Industrial Organizations in October, 1939, he said: "Works programs will be slashed under the excuse that the funds must go for armaments. . . . Unless this nation is dragged into the war, the war boom will probably take up only a small part of the unemployment. The extent of the additional production will barely be sufficient to offset the extensive technological advances which will be immediately revealed in their full significance. When the war boom ends the nation is certain to be in worse economic condition . . . than before the boom began. . . . Rather than the war boom, with all the evils and injustices that arise out of it, labor wants a solid and stable prosperity based upon the kind of fundamental economic readjustments that will last. Rather than work building guns, explosives, battleships and bayonets to kill other workers, labor wants work building homes, automobiles and radios to make people happy."

### LABOR AND THE ADMINISTRATION

The attitude of the rank and file on this subject is expressed in the Peace Proclamation of the United Rubber Workers, CIO Goodyear Local No. 2, of Akron, Ohio. This proclamation states that "labor is beginning to note with increasing alarm certain acts of the Roosevelt Administration which violate the spirit of true neutrality. These acts are: (1) the extension of credits to belligerent nations through utilizations of loopholes in the present Neutrality Act; (2) the sale of American ships to foreign nations (nine were recently sold to Norway) for the purpose of evading restrictions governing the transportation of goods on American ships in war zones; (3) the misapplication of anti-trust laws against labor organizations; and (4) the war-economy nature of the President's proposed budget, which scraps the New Deal Social Security Program to provide funds for increased armaments. . . . In our own states people starve while farmers have a surplus to produce. Yet the National Administration and Congress seem more concerned about sending 'aid' to Finland. Millions for foreign ventures which in the words of Senator Nye are 'warlike acts.' The Treasury can afford to allow income tax deductions for 'relief' funds for Finland, but Ohio's starving families are offered Army soup kitchens. . . . Labor believes that national defence means first of all a defence of the economic and social welfare of our people. Genuine national unity can be achieved only by continuing and extending the rights and security of the majority of the American people—those who toil with hand and brain. National unity means helping America's 10,000,000 unemployed; not supporting relief ventures in foreign lands."

### ATTACKS ON THE LABOR ACT

The persistent attacks upon the National Labor Relations Act, and upon the National Labor Relations Board appointed to administer it, are threats to the democratic rights of American Labor. When the N.L.R.A. was first passed in 1935, resistance crystallized around the Liberty League. For two years the benefits that labor was supposed to obtain from the Act were withheld by litigation intended to obstruct justice and to kill the measure by having it declared unconstitutional. When finally it was declared constitutional by the United States Supreme Court, in April, 1937, agitation began for its amendment. The fight for amendments to emasculate the Act was carried on side by side with a fight to change its administrative personnel. That fight almost came to a head in the 1939 session of Congress. Only the most determined opposition by labor and its friends prevented action on crippling amendments. This fight will probably come to a head in the present session of Congress.

The House Committee to "investigate" the National Labor Relations Board is now at work. The personnel of this so-called "impartial" committee is composed of Howard D. Smith, Charles A. Halleck, Harry N. Routzohn, Abe Murdock and Arthur D. Healey. Smith was one of the committee of fifty lawyers who said that the Act was unconstitutional before it was declared constitutional by the courts. He and Halleck voted against the NLRA and the Wage and Hour Act, and for investigation of sit-down strikes, in 1937, and the NLRB. Routzohn, who is serving his first year in Congress, was for 10 years general counsel for the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners (AFL) and voted for the NLRB investigation. The other two are considered as pro-labor. Healey is co-author of the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act. He worked for the adoption of the Wage-Hour Act, voted against the Smith resolution for investigation of the NLRB, and against the investigation of sit-down strikes in 1937. Murdock took the same stand as Healey on all these matters.

In his pamphlet "The Bill of Rights in Danger" Robert Dunn says that "the tactics of the Smith Committee, as it opens its sessions, are in many respects similar to those of

the Dies Committee. The Smith Committee is obviously the spearhead of the drive against the NLRA. The efforts of the big labor-baiting monopoly interests to cripple the Act with amendments will be greatly aided by the job this committee is performing."

### THE NLRB REPORTS

Coincident with the work of the Smith Committee is the publication of the Fourth Annual Report of the National Labor Relations Board. This report indicates clearly the relation of the Board's activities to industrial peace. "During 1936, the number of strikes exceeded the number of Board cases by 33 per cent. In 1937 the number of Board cases exceeded the number of strikes by 121 per cent, and in 1938 the number of Board cases became 267 per cent greater than the number of strikes."

The accomplishments of the Board are not confined to the reduction of strife. There has also been an increase in written trade agreements, due to the fact that collective bargaining procedures have been extended and more widely accepted throughout American industry. "This development experienced in all industries has been particularly spectacular in the mass production industries. Where before 1937 there were almost no agreements in the iron and steel industry, by 1938 the number increased to 500, covering three-fourths of the industry. In contrast with less than 100 rubber workers covered by agreement by 1932, there are now more than 40,000; more than 80 per cent of this coverage was effected since the Supreme Court decisions of April, 1937, validating the National Labor Relations Act."

Both the AFL and the CIO approve amendment of the Act. The AFL supports the Walsh-Barden Amendments calling for the abolition of the present NLRB; the substitution of a five-man board; and amendments that allow Congress to set rules applying to the selection of an "appropriate unit," and giving the circuit courts the right to review "misrepresentation cases." The CIO, praising the Act as "one of the greatest achievements for organized labor," urges that it be strengthened by (1) provision of criminal penalties for employers violating the Act, (2) withholding government contracts to employers who do not obey the Act, and (3) restricting the NLRB's authority to render decisions "carving out crafts in industrial plants organized by the CIO."

### WHAT IS EXPECTED OF LABOR

The Industrial Mobilization Plan of 1939 states that "war is no longer simply a battle between armed forces in the field—it is a struggle in which each side strives to bring to bear against the enemy the coordinated power of every individual and every material resource at its command. The conflict extends from the soldier in the front line to the citizen in the remotest hamlet in the rear."

Robert Bendiner, writing in *The Nation* (Nov. 11, 1939) says that "once the war is declared, the President will invoke his 'emergency powers.' These are practically boundless. . . . Certain 'restrictive legislation' will be in order. . . . At the request of the War Department, an omnibus program will be presented which will include, first and foremost, a revival of the notorious May Bill. This alone would give the President sweepingly dictatorial power to draft civilians for labor as well as for military duties, fix prices and wages, control industry through a system of licensing and priority regulations, and in fact do everything necessary to a dictatorship except what the bill was ostensibly drawn to do, namely 'prevent profiteering in time of war.'

"All the provisions of the Walsh-Healey Act relating to wages and hours and to child labor will be repealed (only safety and health provisions will be retained), and the National Labor Relations Act will be amended to make possible a system of what will amount to compulsory arbitration. Strikes and lockouts will be forbidden prior to the lapse of a 'reasonable time'." Execution of the entire plan will be placed in the hands of a War Resources Administration.

The 1939 Industrial Mobilization Plan provides that "the personnel to fill positions of responsibility in the War Resources Administration should be obtained from the patriotic business leaders of the nation." Coordinated with this administration will be a War Labor Board, whose chief is to have the "confidence of all groups." It will be a sad day for labor if that "confidence" is misplaced, because labor will have no representative of its own choosing on the Board. Aside from its head, the Board is to have one deputy "satisfactory" to labor and one "satisfactory" to industry. Representatives of each of the major labor groups will have seats in an Advisory Council, but the fact remains that the Council can be invoked only by the War Resources Administration and can be ignored at will.

### LABOR'S OPPOSITION

Awareness of these facts led John L. Lewis to declare before the Congress of Industrial Organizations, Oct. 10, 1939: "Labor demands the right of adequate representation in all governmental boards and agencies set up to cope with the war situation and to mobilize national defence. Real wages of American workers must not be allowed to suffer from rising living costs. Every effort must be made to stop profiteering and to adjust wage levels to rising prices; more than usual vigilance must be exercised to guard existing labor and social legislation and democratic rights against curtailment, under the pretext of emergency considerations."

The AFL Convention, Oct. 2-13, 1939, was of the same mind when it unanimously passed Resolution No. 95, which provided, "that the American Federation of Labor take steps to inaugurate a movement that will protect organized labor from the menace of such 'war dictatorship' as contained in the Industrial Mobilization Plan." To this end the following suggestions were made: "that the legislation be immediately drafted to include the following points; (1) that on all War Boards Labor shall be adequately represented by men appointed by the trade unions themselves; (2) that the rights of collective bargaining by trade unions be maintained, and (3) that the present labor laws shall not be abrogated or nullified on the flimsy pretext of national emergency."

The American people are defenceless against both war and profiteering, without labor unions, progressive organizations and full civil liberties. Defending these rights is the key to keeping America out of war.

Rev. Jule Ayers.

## A Valiant Churchman

The *Christian Century* (February 14) says: "Dr. Harry F. Ward is leaving this week for Mexico, there to spend at least six months in an effort to build up depleted physical resources which have been exhausted in as heroic labors as have been performed by any living churchman. . . . There can be no question but that his leadership of the (American) Civil Liberties Union has put American democracy deeply in his debt. His sustained and fearless acceptance of important civic responsibility should be at once a challenge and a source of pride to every churchman."

## News From the Field

Charles C. Webber expects to speak at Federation Unit meetings at the following Annual Conferences during March and April: Philadelphia, Washington, Delaware, Central Pennsylvania, Wyoming, Newark, New York, Troy and Maine.

## A Protest

When a group of clergymen from the various denominations (including Bishop Francis J. McConnell, Amos Horlacher and Charles Webber from the M.F.S.S.) were informed of proposed cuts in the New York State Executive Budget, they issued a release to the press which read in part as follows:

"We appeal to our State legislators not to reduce the Executive Budget . . .

"Education must not be further curtailed and crippled if we are to train future citizens of democracy.

"Unemployment relief must not be reduced if we are to prevent spiritual and physical degradation.

"Aid to needy municipalities cannot be slashed if the needs of our local communities are to be met.

"Social and labor legislation, which has made New York the pioneer state and the leader in the nation, must not be nullified for lack of adequate appropriations to enforce their provisions.

"Our responsibilities to the taxpayers, who constitute all the people, to the needy, the underprivileged, and the wage earner, compel us to state forthrightly that, if anything, the budget for the State of New York should be increased, not decreased. We believe that democracy is the only social framework in which cultural and spiritual values can survive, and that the cost of sustaining democracy is always less than the expenditures which inevitably follow the neglect of our people and the decadence of our civilization.

"We believe the proper costs of government should be met through equitable means of taxation based on ability to pay, specifically, by a more inclusive and more steeply graded income tax. Unless these basic costs of government are met, we shall face a progressively serious breakdown of our civilization, and higher expenses in terms of more prisons, more institutions for the mentally ill, and more relief disbursements."

The M.F.S.S. sent out to 445 New York Federation members a release on the New York State Executive Budget setting forth the budget's make-up, its inadequacy, and the proposed cuts, and urging the members to telegraph or write to the legislators insisting: That no cut be made in unemployment relief, state aid for education, and shared taxes to the cities; that the appropriations for the Workmen's Compensation and Minimum Wage Divisions be increased to a minimum of $500,000 to permit proper enforcement of minimum wage orders and care of injured workers; that the Boccia Personal Income Tax Bill be passed. (This tax falls on the higher middle and upper bracket incomes and not upon the lower bracket groups.)

## M.F.S.S. Constitution

Excerpts from the Revised Constitution as adopted at the National Emergency Conference in Cleveland, Jan. 25, 1940.

*"Object* (in part). The object of the Federation shall be to deepen within the Church the sense of social obligation and opportunity; to study, from the Christian point of view, social problems and their solution; and to promote social action in the spirit of Jesus Christ . . .

*"Membership.* Persons affiliated with the Methodist Church and all others in sympathy with the objects of the Federation may become members.

"Membership is (as follows): (a) Supporting Membership with an annual fee of $5 and up; (b) Regular Membership with an annual fee of $1 and up; (c) Associate Membership with an annual fee of $1; (d) Youth and Student Membership with an annual fee of 50c.

"All members receive at no extra cost the Social Questions Bulletin published by the Federation.

*"Local Units.* Federation Units may be organized in any Annual Conference of the Methodist Church, or in any local church, educational institution, city, town or rural community. They shall elect their own officers and carry on their own work in harmony with the objects of the Federation."

## The Mail Bag

A New York City social worker: "I read with particular interest the . . . Federation's Bulletin (When People Starve in Cleveland). As a member of both the American Association of Social Workers and the Methodist Church, I was pleased to see the point of view expressed that relief problems *are not solely* the concern of people on relief, social workers employed to administer the program and the generally hostile taxpayers' associations."


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